

Moroccan piece won't even buy you a frank

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about coins and currency.

Q—Thank our lucky stars! We found a terribly old foreign coin dated 1364. It also carries the number "2" and several funny-looking letters. Have we hit the jackpot?

T.E., Chicago

A—Sorry, but you own a common two-franc piece from Morocco that retails for about 40 cents. Morocco dates its coins using the Mohammedan calendar, which started when the prophet Mohammed fled from Mecca to Medina. The 1364 equates to 1945 AD.

Q—Some time ago you ran an article about the pyramid that's topped by an eye on the back of \$1 bills. Could you repeat it? I'm a teacher and can use the information in class.

D.S., Portland, Ind.

A—The motif is part of the great seal of the United States. The pyramid, which represents permanence and strength, is unfinished because there still is work to be done to form a more perfect union. The eye represents an all-seeing God; the words "Annuit Coeptis" mean "He [God] has favored our undertakings," and "Novus Ordo Seclorum" means "A new order of the ages."

Q—I bought a coin book but simply do not understand it. Could you give me the name of a reliable coin dealer in a southwest suburb? I have a feeling that I may own some valuable coins, but a dealer might try to tell me otherwise.

U.P., Oak Lawn

A—Sorry, but I do not recommend specific dealers. You can obtain names and addresses of coin shops in your area by checking the Yellow Pages of the phone book or by reviewing advertisements in newspapers.

Q—My daughter has a \$3 bill issued by the Tiverton Bank in Rhode Island on Oct. 1, 1856. It includes a picture of two godlike figures, one holding a sword and the other a horn of plenty. What do we have? Is it worth anything?

T.O., Chicago

A—Before the Civil War, hundreds of private banks printed their own currency, often with beautiful designs and colors. Today, collectors dub such bills "broken bank notes" because so many of them became worthless when the issuing banks failed.

Your specimen may be worth \$25 or more, depending on its condition and authenticity. Show it to a coin dealer who specializes in currency.